12 SMART IEPs

"If you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else. If you don't know where you're going, the best made maps won't help you get there."

—Robert Mager, psychologist, writer, educator

If you are like many parents, you feel anxious and insecure at IEP meetings. What do you know? What can you offer? What should you do?

Some parents believe that if they are not educators, they have nothing of value to offer in planning their child's educational program. Other parents realize that their child's IEP is not appropriate but do not know how to resolve the problem. Diane belongs to this group:

I do not think my son's IEP is appropriate. The only goal is 'Commitment to academic success.' I imagine 'Commitment to academic success' is appropriate for all students. If 'Commitment to academic success' is not appropriate, what should I propose?

How are measurable goals defined? Can you give me an example of a well-written IEP? (Diane, parent of 15-year-old special education student)

Diane represents countless parents who are confused about IEP goals and objectives. If you are the parent of a child with a disability, you are probably confused too. How do you write IEP goals and objectives? Do you agree with Diane when she says, "Commitment to academic success is not an appropriate goal?"

Learning About SMART IEPs

The term SMART IEPs describes IEPs that are specific, measurable, use action words, are realistic and relevant, and time-limited.

S Specific

M Measurable

A Use Action Words

R Realistic and relevant

T Time-limited

Let's examine each of these concepts.

Specific

SMART IEPs have specific goals and objectives. Specific goals target areas of academic achievement and functional performance. They include clear descriptions of the knowledge and skills that will be taught and how the child's progress will be measured.

Look at these two goals. Which one is specific?

Dylan will increase study skills for academic success.

Dylan will demonstrate the following study skills: skimming written material and use reference materials in social studies class.

Measurable

SMART IEPs have measurable goals and objectives. Measurable means you can count or observe it. Measurable goals allow parents and teachers to know how much progress the child has made since the performance was last measured. With measurable goals, you will know when the child reaches the goal.

Which of these two goals is measurable and observable?

Owen will improve his reading skills.

Given second grade material, Owen will read a passage of text orally at 110-130 wpm with random errors.

Action Words

IEP goals include three components that must be stated in measurable terms:

(a) direction of behavior (increase, decrease, maintain, etc.)

(b) area of need (i.e., reading, writing, social skills, transition, communication, etc.)

(c) level of attainment (i.e., to age level, without assistance, etc.)

SMART IEPs use action words like: "The child will be able to . . ."

Which of these goals is specific, measurable and includes action words?

Betsy will decrease her anger and violation of school rules.

Provided with anger management training and adult support, Betsy will be able to remove herself from environments that cause her to lose control of her behavior so that she has no disciplinary notices.

Realistic and Relevant

SMART IEPs have realistic, relevant goals and objectives that address the child's unique needs that result from the disability. SMART IEP goals are not based on district curricula, state or district tests, or other external standards.

Which of these goals is specific, measurable and realistic?

Kelsey will demonstrate improved writing skills.

Kelsey will improve her writing and spelling skills so she can write a clear, cohesive, and readable paragraph consisting of at least 3 sentences, including compound and complex sentences that are clearly related.

Time-limited

SMART IEP goals and objectives are time-limited. What does the child need to know and be able to do after one year of special education? What is the starting point for each of the child's needs (present levels of academic achievement and functional performance)?

Time-limited goals and objectives enable you to monitor progress at regular intervals.

Assume your child is in the fifth grade. Alex's reading skills are at the early third grade level. Here is a specific, measurable, time-limited goal that tells you what Alex can do now and what he will be able to do after one year of special education:

Present Level of Performance: Given third grade material, Alex reads 50-70 wpm with 4-6 errors.

Annual Goal: Given fifth grade material, Alex will read 120 wpm with only random errors.

To ensure that Alex meets his goal, we will measure his progress at nine-week intervals (4 times during the school year).

After **9 weeks**, given third grade material, Alex will read 110 to 120 wpm with 1-3 errors.

After **18 weeks**, given fourth grade material, Alex will read 70-100 wpm with 1-3 errors.

After **27 weeks**, given fifth grade material, Alex will read 70-100 wpm with 1-3 errors.

At the **end of the year**, Alex will read 120 wpm with only random errors.

Smart IEP Goals and Objectives

IDEA 2004 requires your child's IEP to include:

a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum . . . [and]

a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and . . . meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability. (See Chapter 17: Section 1414 about IEPs)

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Begin by analyzing your child's present levels of performance. The present levels of performance describe "areas of need arising from the child's disability." The present levels of performance tell you what the child knows and is able to do.

How can you make your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance measurable? Here are some suggestions:

- You can specify performance at a grade or age level on objective tests.
- You can indicate a rate (i.e., 3 out of 4 times, 5 minutes out of every 10 minutes.)

Here are some things you need to consider when thinking about your child's IEPs:

- What is the relationship between the goal and the purpose of IDEA 2004, which is to prepare your child for further education, employment and independent living?
- What are your child's areas of need?
- How do these areas of need relate to your child's disability?
- How do these areas of need affect your child's progress in the general education curriculum?
- What does your child need to know or be able to do as a result of the IEP?
- What is it about the child's disability that is interfering with achieving this knowledge or skill?
- What is the measurable starting point for this knowledge or skill?
- How will you know if your child is learning this knowledge or skill?
- What will you see your child doing when s/he reaches this goal?
- What effect will reaching this goal have on your child's learning gaps as compared to his / her peers?
- How can this knowledge or skill be measured?

When you look at the test data from standardized testing and evaluations on your child, this will provide information about what your child knows and is able to do.

Here are some questions to help you identify your child's present levels of academic achievement:

- What is your child's level of academic achievement in reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic?
- Can your child read the textbooks assigned to general education students in her grade?
- Are your child's reading skills two or three years below grade level on an individual educational achievement test of reading? (See Chapter 10 to learn about reading tests)
- Can your child read the grade level textbooks in core academic subjects?

Assume your child is in the tenth grade. Let's look at her functional performance in different areas.

- Can she read a job application? Can she complete the job application without assistance?
- Can she read the driver training manual? Can she pass the driving test without assistance?
- Can she read a map? A bus schedule? Can she balance a checkbook?
- Can she use the Internet to do research?

Developing the IEP

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 describes how IEPs should be developed. The IEP team **shall** consider:

- the child's strengths
- the parents' concerns for enhancing their child's education
- the results of the initial evaluation or most recent evaluation of the child
- the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child.
  (20 USC §1414(d)(3)(A))

Use Baseline Data for Present Levels of Performance

The term "performance" describes what the child can do. What are your child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance? What do your child's standard scores, percentile rank, grade equivalent and age equivalent scores mean? (If you completed the Homework Assignment in Chapter 11, you will be able to answer these questions.)

Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance include data from objective tests, including "criterion-referenced tests, standard achievement tests, diagnostic tests, or any combination of the above." (Source: Appendix A, Question 1, of the 1999 Regulations for IDEA 97)

If your child has reading problems, the baseline data for the present levels of academic achievement should include scores from educational achievement tests of reading. If your child has math problems, the present levels should include scores from achievement tests of math. (Note: The difference between subtest scores and composite scores is explained in Chapters 10 and 11.)

The purpose of using assessments is to determine the child's present levels of educational performance and areas of need arising from the child's disability so that approaches for ensuring the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum and any needed adaptations or modifications to that curriculum can be identified. (Source: Appendix A, Question 1, of the 1999 Regulations for IDEA 97)

Measurable Academic and Functional Goals

IEP goals should enable the child to learn the basic skills that are necessary for the child to be independent and self-sufficient. These basic skills include:

- Communication skills
- Social skills and the ability to interact with others
- Reading skills

The child must learn to communicate. Most children communicate by expressive and receptive speech. Some children use assistive technology to communicate. The child must learn social skills so he or she can interact with other people. Finally, the child must learn to read. Reading is the gateway to all other knowledge.

"*Teaching students to read by the end of third grade is the single most important task assigned to elementary schools*." - American Federation of Teachers

The IEP should:

- Meet the child's academic, development, and functional needs that result from the disability;
- Enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
- Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability. (Source: 20 USC §1414(d))

IEP goals cannot be broad statements about what a child will accomplish in a year, but must address the child's academic achievement and functional performance. The IEP must identify all the child's needs, how the school will meet these needs, and how the school will measure the child's progress.

If the IEP is based on the child's present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs, addresses the child's academic and functional needs, and includes research validated instructional methods, the IEP should pass muster under IDEA 2004.

If the IEP does not include measurable academic and functional goals, the IEP is defective and open to a challenge that it denies the child a FAPE.

SMART IEP Goals and Objectives

Write down several statements about what you want your child to know and be able to do. Revise these statements into goals that are specific, measurable, use action words, are realistic, and time-limited.

Break down each goal into a few measurable short-term steps. Describe what the child will know or be able to do. Focus on behavior that you can count or observe.

How will you know if your child is achieving these goals? Your child's progress should be assessed objectively and often. If your goals are measurable, you will be able to observe the child's behavior.

Here is a SMART IEP goal for a child who needs to learn to type:

> *At the end of the first semester, Mark will touch-type a passage of text at a speed of 20 words per minute, with no more than 10 errors, with progress measured on a five-minute timed test.*
>
> *At the end of the second semester, Mark will touch-type a passage of text at a speed of 40 words per minute, with no more than 5 errors, with progress measured on a five-minute timed test.*

This SMART goal is specific, measurable, and time-limited. It focuses on Mark's need to learn the functional skill of typing. You can measure Mark's progress by observing his typing speed and accuracy.

Short-term Objectives

In IDEA 2004, Congress eliminated requirements for short-term objectives and benchmarks in IEPs for students with disabilities, except for students who take alternate assessments.

By eliminating short-term objectives and benchmarks, Congress made teachers' jobs more difficult. Annual goals will have to be far more comprehensive than they were under IDEA 1997. Since short-term objectives and benchmarks were eliminated, this information will now have to be included in the annual goals.

Eliminating short-term objectives creates as many problems for educators as it does for parents. Short-term objectives and benchmarks are steps that measure the child's progress toward the annual goals in the IEP. When written correctly, short-term objectives provide teachers with a roadmap and a clear mechanism to evaluate the child's progress.

Pitfalls

As a parent, you must be vigilant. The danger is that the IEP team will propose annual goals that are not specific and measurable, do not meet the child's academic and functional needs, and do not describe how the child's progress will be measured.

Teachers will have to work harder and think more creatively to ensure that the annual goals address all the child's educational needs and that the goals are written in clear, measurable language.

Other IEP Issues

Advising Parents About Child's Progress

Did you know that the school must inform you about your child's educational progress at regular intervals? In fact, your child's IEP must include:

> a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals … will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making

toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided. (Source: 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(A)(III))

Reviewing and Revising the IEP

As your child grows and changes, the child's educational needs will also change. The IEP team must meet at least once a year to review the child's IEP and determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved. The IEP team is to revise the IEP to address

- any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general education curriculum, where appropriate
- the results of any reevaluation
- information about the child provided to, or by, the parents
- the child's anticipated needs
- other matters

Learning to Write SMART Goals and Objectives

Are you still confused about SMART IEP goals and objectives? If you believe a parent cannot develop SMART goals and objectives, it is time to change your beliefs!

Change the facts. Assume that like many parents, inactivity and stress have caused you to gain weight. This extra weight came on gradually — so gradually that you did not realize how much weight you had gained until you went to the doctor for a check-up. When you weighed in, you discovered that you gained 50 pounds since your last checkup three years ago!

Your doctor has more bad news. You are "borderline diabetic" and your blood pressure is high. You must lose weight and change your lifestyle. If you do not take action, you are at risk to develop serious health problems within the next few years. The doctor advised you that children model their parent's behavior. If you do not change your behavior, your children are very likely to be obese and develop chronic health problems too.

When you go back to work, you think about what the doctor said. What can you do? You have been on fad diets. You lost weight but the loss was always temporary. When you went off the diet, you gained even more weight. You are worried and distracted. Fifty pounds!

Your friend Marie asks, "What's wrong?" You explain. Marie tells you that several of her friends used the Weight Watchers® Program to lose weight. She explains that Weight Watchers is not a crash-diet or fad. You hit the Internet and find the Weight Watchers web site. You learn that Weight Watchers programs are research-based by specialists in endocrinology, diabetes, nutrition, clinical and health psychology, and

exercise physiology.

You talk to friends and do more research. You learn about low carb diets and low fat diets.

One night, you listened to a talk show on the way home from work. The guest was an engineer who became a physical fitness and nutrition expert. He said, "Successful weight loss is about a healthy diet and exercise." He explained, "One pound of fat is equal to 3,500 calories. If we reduce our daily caloric intake by 500 calories, we will lose one pound of fat in one week. If we burn 500 calories a day by exercising, we will lose one pound of fat a week. If we reduce our daily intake by 500 calories **and** burn 500 calories a day by exercising, we will lose two pounds a week.

The SMART Weight Loss Program

You decide to create a SMART Weight Loss Program that is tailored to your unique needs as an overweight, stressed-out parent. Your SMART Weight Loss Program will include goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, use action words, are realistic, relevant, and time-limited.

Present Levels: Baseline Data

You are 5 feet, 5 inches tall and weigh 190 pounds. You check height-weight charts on the Internet. According to these charts, you should weigh between 138 and 144 pounds. You plug your height (5 feet, 5 inches) and weight (190 pounds) to find your Body Mass Index. Your BMI is 32. A number of 30 or more "is considered obese – people in this range are at great risk for disease."

Measurable Goals and Objectives

Since you weigh 190 pounds, this is your starting point. Your goal is to lose 50 pounds. You decide to lose 10% of your body weight in 12 weeks. If you cut 800 calories a day, you should lose that 20 pounds in 12 weeks. You decide to reduce your daily caloric intake by 400 calories and burn another 400 calories a day through exercise.

> **Long-term Goal:** I will lose 50 pounds in nine months.
>
> **Short-term Objective:** I will lose 19 pounds (10% of my present weight) in 12 weeks.

Are your goals and objectives specific, measurable, use action words, realistic, relevant, and time-limited? Yes! An independent observer can quickly look at the data – your weight as measured by the bathroom scale – and determine if you are making progress toward your goal.

Revising Goals and Objectives

You were successful on your SMART Weight Loss Plan and lost 20 pounds in 12 weeks. At the end of 12 weeks, you weigh 170 pounds. You still need to lose 30

pounds to reach your goal of 140 pounds. If you continue at the rate of 1.5 pounds a week, you will reach your goal in approximately 20 weeks. You revise your goal:

> **Long-term Goal:** I will lose 30 pounds in 20 weeks.
>
> **Short-term Objective:** I will lose 15 pounds in 10 weeks. At the end of 10 weeks, my weight will be 155 pounds.

You are on a roll! At the end of 10 weeks, you weigh 155 pounds. Only 15 pounds to go! You revise your goal again:

> **Goal & Objective:** I will lose 15 pounds in 10 weeks. At the end of 10 weeks, my weight will be 140 pounds.

Are your goals and objectives specific, measurable, use action words, are realistic, and time-limited? Yes!

You designed a SMART Weight Loss Program to measure your progress objectively and often. When you broke down your long-term goal into short-term objectives, you gained control over the process. When you met the first objective of losing 10% of your body weight in 12 weeks, you realized that you could complete this weight loss program successfully.

You used SMART IEP principles to develop a SMART Weight Loss Program. Your SMART Weight Loss Program includes specific, measurable, active, realistic, time-limited goals and objectives.

Using Objective Data

When a doctor develops a treatment plan for a sick child, the doctor uses objective data from diagnostic tests. Medical specialists use objective data to measure the effectiveness of treatment plans. You want your doctor to use objective data to analyze the effectiveness of a treatment program, not subjective feelings and beliefs.

Your child's IEP is similar to a medical treatment plan. The IEP includes:

- Present levels of performance from objective tests and assessments
- Measurable goals and objectives
- A plan to address the child's educational problems
- A statement of how the child's progress will be measured

To Make Decisions

You are a member of your child's IEP team. The IEP team must identify and define your child's problems before the team can develop an appropriate educational plan.

The IEP team will gather information from different sources. This information may include observations of your child in different environments, including the home and classroom. This information includes objective test data that describes your child's problems, the severity of the problems, and measure your child's progress or lack of progress.

Let's look at a medical problem to see how progress should be assessed. Your son John complains that his throat is sore. His throat is red. His skin is hot to the touch. He is sleepy and lethargic. When you take John to the doctor, his temperature is 104 degrees. Lab tests show that John has an elevated white count. A strep test is positive. According to these tests, John has a strep infection.

Your doctor uses this objective test data to develop a treatment plan. When you return for a follow-up visit, the doctor is likely to order more tests. You need objective tests to know if John's infection is under control. Similarly, you need objective tests to know that your child is acquiring reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

To Measure Progress

Jay is an eight-year-old boy who received special education services for two years, beginning in kindergarten. Jay's parents felt that he was not learning how to read and write like other children his age. The school personnel assured the parents that Jay was making progress.

After two years, a child psychologist in the private sector tested Jay. While Jay's abilities were in the average to above average range, his reading and language skills were at the kindergarten level. Despite two years of special education, Jay had not learned to read or write.

When a teacher says a child is making progress, the teacher is offering an opinion based on subjective observations. In many cases, teacher opinions and subjective observations are not accurate. If you have concerns about your child's progress, get independent testing of your child's reading, writing, and mathematics skills by an expert in the private sector. These test results will tell you if your child is making progress.

Is your child receiving passing grades? Can you rely on grades to measure progress? No. Grades are not objective assessments of progress. Many factors influence grades, including grade inflation and the teacher's beliefs and perceptiona about the child's effort, attendance, behavior, and attitude.

You say, "The IEP for my child does not include objective measures of progress. How can the IEP be written differently? How can I tell if my child is actually making progress?"

Mike Trains for the Fitness Test

Change the facts. Your eight-year-old son, Mike, is upset because he did not pass the President's Physical Fitness Test. He wants to pass the test next year and asks for your help.

To pass the President's Physical Fitness Test, Mike must meet specific criteria. His performance on fitness skills is measured objectively. You check Mike's scores. He ran the 50-yard dash within the specified time. He completed only 12 out of an expected 25 sit-ups and could not complete a single pull-up.

You and Mike know what he needs to do to qualify for the President's Physical Fitness Award. You help him design a SMART training program with goals and objectives that target his weak areas (i.e. sit-ups, pull-ups) and maintain or improve his running ability.

When Mike takes the Fitness Test, his performance on the test is measured objectively. His running speed over a specified distance is measured with a stopwatch. His ability to do the required number of sit-ups and pull-ups is measured by counting. Because these measurements are objective, anyone who counts Mike's sit-ups and pull-ups will know if he meets the criteria for the Physical Fitness Award. The observer will focus on the outcome of the educational program, not the process of Mike's program.

Kevin Learns to Type

Let's look at a goal that is written to evaluate a child's progress subjectively. We will revise the goal to make it a SMART goal that is specific, measurable, uses action words, is realistic and relevant, and time-limited. Kevin is learning to type.

The school's proposed IEP goal says that Kevin will acquire keyboarding skills. Kevin's progress will be assessed by "Teacher Judgment," "Teacher Observation" and "Teacher-made Tests" with a score of "80%" as the criteria for success. This goal does not include information about words per minute or errors.

After we revise this goal to make it specific, measurable, active, realistic, relevant, and time-limited, the goal reads:

> *By the end of the first semester, Kevin will touch-type a passage of text at a rate of 15 words per minute with no more than 10 errors on a 5-minute test.*
>
> *By the end of this academic year, Kevin will touch type a passage of text at a rate of 35 words per minute with no more than five errors on a 5-minute test.*

Megan Learns to Read

Meet Megan, a fifth grader who has not learned to read. Megan's reading decoding skills are at the 10th percentile level. How will Megan's parents know if she is benefiting from the special education program? If Megan receives an appropriate education, her scores on reading subtests will improve.

According to Megan's SMART IEP goal:

> *After one year of specialized instruction, Megan will be able to decode words at the 25th percentile level as measured by the decoding score of the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT).*

When Megan's reading skills reach the 25th percentile level, she is making progress. Her progress will be measured with standardized tests. Megan's next IEP will include new goals and objectives to bring her reading skills up to the level of her peers.

Non-Goals: Attitude Statements

Earlier in this chapter, Diane asked if "commitment to academic success" was an appropriate goal. IEPs often include attitude statements, i.e., "have a good attitude," "display a cooperative spirit," or "develop healthy peer relationships."

You cannot measure an attitude. An attitude is a state of mind that exists within an individual. Attitudes are not measurable, nor are attitudes observable to outsiders.

You must be able to describe an outcome to know if the goal has been met. How will you know if an attitude goal is met? Can you measure Johnny's "better attitude?" No. Can you observe "commitment to academic success?" No.

Perhaps we agree that Johnny has a better attitude. On what do we base our opinions? Dr. Robert Mager, author of books about goal analysis and measuring educational outcomes, explains that we base our opinions on circumstantial evidence.

We use circumstantial evidence to decide if Johnny's attitude has improved. If Johnny displays behaviors that we associate with a good attitude, we conclude that Johnny's attitude has improved. Examples: Johnny smiles often. Johnny stopped yelling at the teacher and his classmates. Johnny offers to help others. These are observations, not subjective beliefs.

Strategies: How to Deal with Attitude Goals

Assume your son Johnny has behavior problems in class. The IEP team proposes to change Johnny's behavior. You agree that this is an appropriate goal but you have concerns about the educators' ability to devise specific, measurable, realistic goals to addresss the behavior. clear goals and objectives. What can you do?

Strategies: Ask Questions (the Columbo Strategy)

Use the Columbo Strategy. Ask questions —"5 Ws + H + E" questions. (Who, What, Why, Where, When, How, and Explain.) Tell the school staff that you are confused. You want to ask a stupid question. (Do you see why we call this the "Columbo Strategy?")

What is Johnny doing? How often? When? Ask more questions. Listen attentively to the answers. If you use "5 Ws + H + E" questions skillfully, you may be able to help school personnel shift from reporting their feelings and beliefs to reporting their observations. facts and observations.

From the team members' comments, you can make a list of behaviors. What behaviors will they observe? Who will observe these behaviors? When? How often? As you continue to ask questions, the team members will make statements that describe observable behavior—circumstantial evidence.

Finally, his teacher says, "Johnny pinches his classmates at least two times an hour." Good! Now you have data. You have Johnny's present levels of performance in pinching to use as a starting point.

You ask, "What change in Johnny's pinching behavior do we seek?"

The teacher may say, "Johnny should never pinch anyone." While this may be true, you need a baseline starting point before you can develop a goal and measure improved behavior.

After some discussion, the team formulates this goal: "During the next two weeks, Johnny will pinch classmates no more than once every two hours." Now you have a goal that allows you to measure changes in Johnny's pinching behavior.

Anticipate resistance from educators if you criticize abstract goals and request observable goals and objectives. When you encounter resistance, use this strategy suggested by Dr. Mager.

Ask the resistant person to describe the child's negative, undesirable observable behaviors. Make a list of these negative observable behaviors that need to be changed. When you finish your list, turn the list around and use the list to describe desired positive behaviors. These positive behaviors are "circumstantial evidence" that can be used to determine that the goal has been reached

Strategies: Make Behavior Measurable

You can make behavior measurable by defining the factors surrounding the behavior. These factors include:

- precipitating events ("when asked to work independently")
- environmental factors ("when dealing with female authority figures)
- other observable patterns ("after lunch," "always on the playground," "in math class")

You can also make behavior measurable by identifying the results of the behavior (i.e. "removal from the classroom increases this negative behavior.")

Non-Goals: States of Being

Many IEPs include goals that cannot be measured. Examples: to appreciate music, to understand weather, to have a better attitude, to develop a love of reading, to show respect for authority.

Non-Goal: The student will appreciate classical music.

To accomplish this non-goal, the student will listen to classical music three hours a day, for one month. How can you assess "appreciation of classical music?" How will independent observers know if the student appreciates classical music? The goal focuses on a state of being. You cannot measure a state of being.

Non-Goal: The student will understand the workings of a gasoline combustion engine.

Do you want the student to understand a gasoline combustion engine? How will you know if the student understands a gasoline combustion engine?

Do you really want the student to be able to repair a gasoline combustion engine? Do you want the student to be able to take an engine apart and put it back together? Do you want the student to be able to diagnose a malfunctioning engine?

Homework Assignment #1: You Learn to Write Goals

Make a list of statements that describe what you expect your child to know (knowledge) and what you expect your child to be able to do (performance).

Select one statement. Write one goal that is specific, measurable, uses action words, is realistic and relevant, and is time-limited. Use words that describe the intended outcome. For example, "Mary will be able to . . ."

Write the performances that will show that your child has mastered the goal. As you read these statements, you see how they become more specific:

- My child will learn to read.
- My child will learn to read at the fifth grade level.
- After one year of individualized tutoring an hour a day, my child will read at the fifth grade level.
- After one year of individualized tutoring an hour a day in the acquisition of reading skills, my child will read at the fifth grade level, as measured by the global composite score of the Gray Oral Reading Test.

Your independent consultant or evaluator can give you reasonable timeframes for remediation. Do not set your goals too low!

Homework Assignment #2: You Learn to Write SMART IEP Goals and Objectives

Go through the most recent testing on your child. Make a list of your child's educational achievement scores in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling.

Revise your list and write your child's skills in objective measurable terms. Use data from tests (i.e., percentile ranks, standard scores, grade- or age-equivalent scores).

List your child's baseline skills as present levels of performance. Example: "My child reads a passage of text orally at the 10th percentile level as measured by the Gray Oral Reading Test."

After one year of special education, where should the skill be? Write this statement as a measurable goal. For example:

> *By May 15 [one year later], my child will be able to read a passage of text orally at the ___ [insert the appropriate increased percentile or grade equivalent level] as measured by the Gray Oral Reading Test.*

Earlier in this book, we described the hierarchy of skills that children must acquire:

- Communication skills
- Social skills and the ability to interact with others
- Reading skills

Most children with disabilities have reading problems. In the last three chapters, you learned how to measure reading skills objectively.

You need to focus on the skills your child needs to acquire. These skills may include communication, social skills, academic skills, or knowledge and skills in other areas affected by your child's disability. You need to determine how you can objectively determine the child's baseline levels of performance and how to measure the child's progress.

To learn more about IEP goals that are appropriate for your child, you must learn about your child's disability. You must learn how to measure changes in skills. When you master these tasks, you will be able to write measurable goals and objectives.

In Summation

In this chapter, you learned about SMART IEPs that are specific, measurable, use action words, are realistic and relevant, and time-limited. You learned how to use baseline levels of performance to write measurable goals and objectives. It's time to learn about special education law.